

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 CU-02 DHA-02 IO-13 ACDA-07
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PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /082 W
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R 171642Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3403
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMEMBASSY MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 4392

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, IT, UR
SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY OVER VENICE BIENNALE CONTINUES

REF: ROME 3581

1. SUMMARY. THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR'S REPRESENTATION ABOUT THE THEME FOR THIS
YEAR'S VENICE BIENNALE HAS BUBBLED ALONG DURING RECENT DAYS.
APPEARING IN PARLIAMENT MARCH 16, FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI
EXPRESSED THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRM COMMITMENT TO THE FREEDOM
OF THE NATION'S CULTURAL LIFE FROM OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE
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AND REJECTED ANY THEORY OR PRACTICE OF LIMITED
SOVEREIGNTY. THE DEBATE PROVIDED THE
FOREIGN MINISTER AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THE GOVERN-
MENT'S OVERALL COMMITMENT TO LIBERTY AND TO HUMAN
RIGHTS. AS AN OLIVE BRANCH TO THE SOVIETS, FORLANI
NOTED THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S APPROACH WAS
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF NORMAL DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE AND

THAT ALLEGATIONS OF UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE IN ITALIAN AFFAIRS BY AMBASSADOR RYZHOV WERE UNJUSTIFIED. THE REAL WINNER IN THE ENTIRE DISPUTE IS THE VENICE BIENNALE SINCE THE CURRENT OUTCRY INCREASES THE PROSPECTS THAT PARLIAMENT WILL APPROVE THE REQUIRED FINANCIAL SUBSIDY WHICH IS NEEDED TO FLOAT THE EVENT. END SUMMARY.

2. ALTHOUGH OVERSHADOWED IN RECENT DAYS BY THE LOCKHEED DEBATE IN THE PARLIAMENT AND STUDENT DISORDERS IN THE MAJOR CITIES, THE CONTROVERSY STIRRED UP BY SOVIET AMBASSADOR RYZHOV'S REPRESENTATION ABOUT THE THEME (DISSENT IN EASTERN EUROPE) FOR THE FORTHCOMING VENICE BIENNALE HAS REMAINED A NEWSWORTHY ITEM. ASIDE FROM CONTINUING CHARGES OF UNWARRANTED SOVIET INTERFERENCE IN ITALIAN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, THE DEBATE HAS ALSO CENTERED ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND PARTICULARLY THE SECRETARY GENERAL (MANZINI) OF THE MINISTRY, HAS HANDLED THE AFFAIR.

3. IN RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES, INCLUDING ONE SUBMITTED BY COMMUNIST DEPUTIES, FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI APPEARED IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES MARCH 16 TO OUTLINE THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT. FORLANI DEFINED CULTURAL LIBERTY AS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM WHICH THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO DEFEND NOT ONLY DOMESTICALLY BUT ALSO IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. PRESEMPABLY IN REFERENCE TO AMBASSADOR RYZHOV'S SUGGESTION THAT THE OTHER CONFIDENTIAL

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WARSAW PACT NATIONS WOULD FOLLOW THE SOVIET LEAD IN WITHDRAWING FROM THE BIENNALE IF CURRENT PROGRAM PLANS REMAIN UNCHANGED, FORLANI ALSO REJECTED ANY THEORY OR PRACTICE OF "LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY."

4. AS AN OLIVE BRANCH TO THE SOVIETS, FORLANI NOTED THAT AMBASSADOR RYZHOV'S REPRESENTATION WAS MADE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF NORMAL DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE, AND HE ADDED THAT IN PREVIOUS YEARS SIMILAR REPRESENTATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE MFA ON THE PART OF OTHER COUNTRIES. IN EACH CASE, ACCORDING TO FORLANI, THE MFA HAS INDICATED THAT IT DOES NOT SHARE THE REASON FOR THE REPRESENTATION AND THAT IT WAS NOT ABLE TO INVOLVE ITSELF IN ANY WAY WITH THE BIENNALE WHICH IS A FULLY INDEPENDENT ENTITY. FORLANI WENT ON TO DESCRIBE THE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WHICH EXIST BETWEEN THE USSR AND ITALY AND INDICATED THE ITALIAN DESIRE TO EXPAND AND DEVELOP THEM. HOWEVER, THESE FACTORS, HE ADDED, DO NOT ATTENUATE THE COMMITMENT OF THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE DEFENSE OF LIBERTY

AND OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

5. IN THE ENSUING DEBATE, THERE WAS GENERAL SUPPORT FOR FORLANI'S EXPLANATION, ALTHOUGH SOME PARLIAMENTARIANS (AMONG THEM A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SOCIALISTS) FOUND IT INSUFFICIENT. INTERVENING ON BEHALF OF HIS PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, PCI DEPUTY TORTORELLA FOUND IT EXPEDIENT TO NOTE THAT AMONG THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH HAD MADE PAST REPRESENTATIONS OVER THE BIENNALE WAS THE UNITED STATES.

6. COMMENT. FORLANI'S EXPLANATION HAD A LITTLE BIT FOR EVERYONE. IT REITERATED THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO FREEDOM OF THE NATION'S CULTURAL LIFE FROM OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ATTEMPTING TO PLACE THE SOVIET APPROACH IN A REASONABLE PERSPECTIVE. THE CONTROVERSY PERMITTED THE GOVERNMENT TO REJECT
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ONCE AGAIN THE SO-CALLED BREZHNEV DOCTRINE ON LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY AND TO REAFFIRM ITS COMMITMENT TO THE DEFENSE OF LIBERTY AND OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN A CONTEXT IN WHICH THE REFERENCE WAS CLEARLY TO THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS WARSAW PACT ALLIES.

7. THE REAL WINNER IN THE ENTIRE CONTROVERSY, OF WHICH IT IS OBVIOUS THAT WE HAVE NOT HEARD THE END, IS THE VENICE BIENNALE AND ITS DIRECTOR RIPA DI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 4392

E.O. 11652: GDS
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MEANA. PRIOR TO SOVIET REPRESENTATION, THE LEGISLATION
NEEDED TO ENSURE THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO
THIS YEAR'S BIENNALE HAD BEEN LANGUISHING IN THE
PARLIAMENT. WITH ALL THE FOCUS ON THE SUBJECT, IT IS
VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT A MOVE WILL BE MADE BEFORE
LONG TO PUSH THE LEGISLATION THROUGH TO A FINAL VOTE.
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MEANWHILE, IT IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT THE ORGANIZING
COMMITTEE OF THE BIENNALE WILL REJECT THE RESIGNATION
OF RIPA DI MEANA (A SOCIALIST) AS DIRECTOR OF THE
BIENNALE, THEREBY STRENGTHENING HIS POSITION AFTER HE
HAD GIVEN HIS PARTY THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SOME
POLITICAL HAY VIS-A-VIS THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY
ON THE SUBJECTS OF DISSENT IN EASTERN EUROPE AND OF TIES
TO THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES.

8. IN AN EFFORT TO COUNTER THE NEGATIVE PUBLICITY FROM
THE PLANNED BIENNALE, THE SOVIETS, IN COOPERATION WITH
THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE VENETO AND THE ITALY-
USSR SOCIETY, ARE PLANNING TO HOLD A WEEK OF SOVIET
CULTURAL/EVENTS IN THE AREA THIS FALL, MEANWHILE, SOVIET
DEPUTY MINISTER OF CULTURE POPOV'S ASSERTION IN THE
LATEST ISSUE OF LITGAZ THAT THE PROPOSED THEME OF THE
BIENNALE IS A PROVOCATION AND REPRESENTS INTERFERENCE
IN SOVIET INTERNAL AFFAIRS HAS RECEIVED WIDE-SPREAD
PRESS ATTENTION AND HAS ADDED SOME ADDITIONAL FUEL
TO THE CURRENT DEBATE TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE SOVIETS.BEAUDRY

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